

Chapter 2

Connecting Perception and Communication



CHAPTER OUTLINE

Perception and
Communication

The Perception Process

Perceptual Differences



Learning Objectives

This chapter will help you:

- 2.1** Make the connection between perception and your communication competence.
- 2.2** Understand the three stages of perception and how they affect your communication.
- 2.3** Identify seven reasons why different people may perceive the same situation in different ways.

Making Everyday Connections

As discussed in the opening of Chapter 1 and throughout that chapter, it is clear that social media plays a predominant role in our everyday lives. We knowingly share information electronically, but many of us don't realize the extent of what is communicated through social media without our knowledge or permission, and how that information may be perceived or used. For example, Jill, a college student, is a relatively conservative person compared to most, especially when it comes to what she posts on her Facebook pages, where she also limits access to her closest friends. Jordan, a friend from the same hometown, and Jill have been writing on each other's wall for several years. Much of what they write is conversational in tone, but it often contains misspellings, incomplete sentences, and some inappropriate language. At a large party in their hometown, Jordan took photos of Jill and others acting a bit crazy and suggestive after they had too much to drink. Jordan tagged the photos to Jill and several others. At the time, Jill laughed when she first saw the photos. However, several weeks later she realized that the photos of her were getting around to too many of her friends and others. She asked Jordan to delete them. He did.

Jill, a graduating senior, finally got an interview with the Gallup Corporation in Omaha, Nebraska, for her dream job. Jill had the interview and thought she did really well and was pretty certain she would get an offer. Joyce, the hiring supervisor at Gallup, knew that Nicole, an employee who works with her, attended the same small liberal arts

college as Jill. Joyce asked Nicole if she knew anything about Jill. Nicole said she didn't know Jill well, but knows of Jill. Nicole, a Facebook friend of Jordan's, receives all of his posts and photos. She told Joyce that she has seen several posts and a lot of photos of Jill on Jordan's page. Joyce asked if she could see what was posted. On the basis of the photos, the supervisor decided not to offer Jill the job.

Questions to Think About

1. Was the supervisor justified in her perception of Jill? Why or why not?
2. Was Nicole ethical in sharing the photos of Jill without Jill's knowledge? Why or why not?
3. What influences our perceptions more—what we see or what we hear? Explain.
4. What lessons can we learn from the above scenario about perception and its role in communicating with others?
5. How might a competent communicator respond to the above situation? If you were Jill, what might you say to the supervisor, if anything? To Nicole?
6. Describe a situation or situations in which technology, such as a social networking site, a text, a tweet, Instagram, or even broader media, influenced your perceptions of others or an event.

Perception and Communication

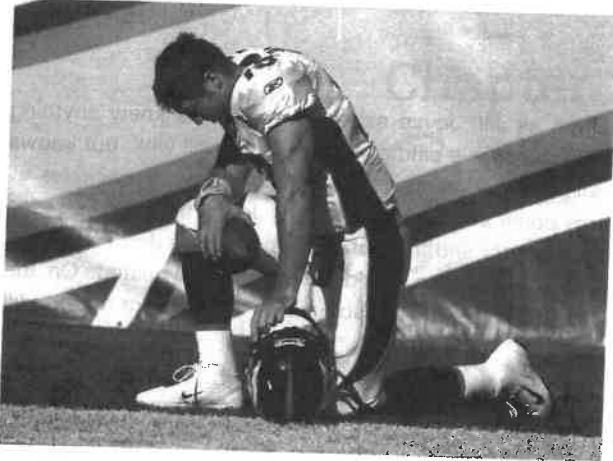
2.1 Make the connection between perception and your communication competence.

Perception involves selecting, organizing, and interpreting information to give meaning to our communication and lives. Our perceptions, based on our experiences, give meaning to our communication and also influence what and how we communicate with others.

Perception is at the heart of our communication. It can also be argued that without communication perceptions could not exist. Thus, equally true is the statement that communication lies at the heart of our perceptions. Robert L. Scott, a communication scholar, writes, "Nothing is clear in and of itself but in some context for some person."¹ A difference between two people's perceptions, for example, does not necessarily make the perception of one person more correct or accurate than that of the other. It does, however, mean that communication between individuals who see things differently may require more understanding, negotiation, persuasion, and tolerance of those

Perception

The process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information to give personal meaning to the communication we receive.



Our perceptions do influence our reactions and our communication. It is virtually impossible for our feelings about things to be the same as others'. We perceive feelings based on past experiences and communication, sometimes from unreliable sources. Why do you think Tim Tebow, a quarterback in the NFL, is kneeling? Based on rumors circulating in November 2014, Tebow was said to be arrested for soliciting a prostitute. How would that news affect your perceptions? The rumors were published by *Daily Leak*, a website that publishes fake news stories.

Competent communicators understand the role of perception and its influence on communication and vice versa. Competent communicators also know that their perception of a single communication, event, or situation may be only part of the story, and that they often need more information before drawing final conclusions. They are not afraid to seek out more information or to ask questions before coming to any conclusions.

Our perceptions—whether complete or incomplete, accurate or inaccurate—influence our communication and decisions, as illustrated in the “Making Everyday Connections” example at the beginning of the chapter. For example, Jordan’s Facebook photos showing Jill acting wild or foolish were perceived negatively by the supervisor, even though she had never met Jill and didn’t know anything about her. Our perceptions of people, situations, events, and objects and how they communicate represent our reality. However, our perception of reality may not be the same as someone else’s. For example, when one person says to another, “I understand how difficult this might be for you,” the statement is based on one person’s perception of another’s reality. It does not mean he or she actually knows what the other person is experiencing.

The Perception Process

2.2 Understand the three stages of perception and how they affect your communication.

Perceiving in and of itself appears simple enough. After all, we do it all the time, and it seems so natural that we hardly give it much thought. But perceiving is a complex thought process that, if not understood, could lead to communication misunderstandings—some quite costly—such as losing an internship, a promotion, or a friend. The first stage of perception is awareness of our surroundings and selecting what we will attend to. Second, we organize the information in a way that makes sense to us. Third, we interpret or assign meaning to the information we receive. Finally, we must be able to communicate our perceptions to others. This process is summarized in Table 2.1.

Selection

Many people imagine the brain to be similar in operation to a video camera; information enters through one of the senses and is stored in the brain. Actually, the

Table 2.1 The Perception Process

Term	Definition	Example
Selection	Sorting one stimulus from another	Selective exposure Selective attention Selective retention
Organization		Closure

environment has far too much information for the brain to absorb at once, so the brain ignores much of it. It accepts a certain amount of information and organizes it into meaningful patterns. All of these connections happen in milliseconds. For example, the first time you walked into a classroom, what did you notice? More than likely your senses were fully or at least partially engaged and you observed who else was in the room. You saw and heard other students, some of whom you may have known from previous classes, and others whom you didn't know. You may have seen a smart board, the teacher, and other aspects of the classroom and those in it. The question is, what did you take away from the experience and why? What did you communicate, if anything, to others you know?

We process and catalog each person, sound, object, or surrounding, especially when new or novel. However, we all are creatures of habit, and when others behave in routine or predictable ways, we are more likely to gloss over or ignore important details, which can lead to misunderstandings, missed communication, or inaccurate communication. Competent communicators are *aware* of what is happening so that they make good choices about what to ignore and what to attend to. Because they know it is impossible to attend to, sense, perceive, retain, and give meaning to every stimulus or message they encounter, they *select* the relevant information and narrow their focus. **Selection** occurs when we mentally sort one thing from another, based on our previous experiences. Selection is of three types: selective exposure, selective attention, and selective retention.

SELECTIVE EXPOSURE The deliberate choices we make to experience or to avoid experiencing particular stimuli are referred to as **selective exposure**. For example, when we choose to attend to one thing over another we are using selective exposure. Taking in the sights, sounds, smells, and so on occurs only if we are paying attention to them.

SELECTIVE ATTENTION Focusing on a specific message while ignoring or downplaying other stimuli is called **selective attention**. That is, you concentrate on something or someone of interest, and you eliminate or reduce the effects of all extraneous messages. For example, you focus on the accent and ignore the message. Attending to something usually requires a decisive effort, but even the best attempts to concentrate can be interrupted by distractions. For example, a cell phone going off in a quiet classroom, a loud sneeze, background talking, a siren, a baby's cry, a call for help, an odor, or a movement easily averts our attention. Continuing to attend to the original task usually requires extra effort. Similarly, when we converse with someone in a crowded lounge with loud music in the background, we focus on each other's words more attentively and ignore the other sounds. This blocking out of all extraneous stimuli to retain concentration is an instance of selective attention. Competent communicators quickly determine what is important to focus on and ignore extraneous stimuli, so that their communication is accurate.

SELECTIVE RETENTION Because we cannot possibly remember all the information that we encounter, we also are selective in what we retain. **Selective retention** occurs when we choose to process and store specific information we want to eventually retrieve and use again. We are more likely to remember for a longer time any information that agrees with our views and to selectively forget information that does not. In addition, after perceiving and selecting certain stimuli, we may retain only a portion of them. For example, how many times have you listened to an instructor tell how to

selection

Sorting of one stimulus from another.

selective exposure

The deliberate choices we make to experience or to avoid particular stimuli.

selective attention

Focusing on a specific message while ignoring or downplaying other stimuli.

selective retention

The processing, storing, and retrieving of information that we have already selected, organized, and interpreted.

Organization

To help understand how we organize the information we receive and its effect on communication, consider what happens when you enter a room filled with people. When you first walk in, you begin to sort and organize people into groups or categories. Chances are you will initially look for people you know; by doing so, you are categorizing the people in the room according to those you know and those you don't. People you know and who happen to be nearest to you are those with whom you will likely communicate first. You will also probably spend more time with people you perceive to be like you than with those who are not.

The way our minds organize and sort information has a profound effect on how we perceive others, how we talk with them, and how they respond to us. We perceive things, places, and people because of who we are, our backgrounds and experiences, and how we see ourselves. We are also likely to focus on concrete aspects, such as a person's height, attractiveness, age, or race, rather than on abstract psychological aspects, such as sincerity, honesty, and so on.

cognitive complexity

A measure of our ability to process and store simple to complicated information.

Cognitive complexity is a term used by psychologists to measure and explain our ability to process, interpret, and store simple to intricate information. The more cognitively complex we are, the more sophisticated our perceptions. For example, as a cognitively complex person, you will notice several attributes about a person at the same time: talks a lot, dresses well, tells good jokes, and is attractive in appearance. A person who is less cognitively complex may only notice one of these characteristics. At an abstract psychological level, you might infer that the behaviors you observe reflect an extroverted, sincere, and self-confident personality. This level of assessment is a sophisticated explanation because it involves perceptions of why the person acts as he or she does, and it is based solely on concrete observations.

People with high levels of cognitive complexity are likely to be flexible in interpreting complicated events and situations and are able to integrate new information into their perceptions. Such people are also likely to use "person-centered" messages and take multiple attributes into account when communicating with others. For example, they are able to incorporate others' values, beliefs, appearance, and emotional needs into their messages. This ability allows those with high levels of cognitive complexity to be effective communicators because they are able to understand and process multiple perspectives at one time.

closure

Filling in of details so that a partially perceived entity appears to be complete.

CLOSURE One way to organize the stimuli around us is to fill in missing pieces and to extend lines in order to finish or complete a figure. This completion process is called **closure**. In Figure 2.1, we see a figure with what appear to be random, unconnected shapes. Through the process of closure we may transform the random shapes into an image of a cow. This occurs because we are always trying to make meaningless material meaningful. We perceive the image of the cow by mentally connecting the white spaces.

Filling in the blank spaces or missing information helps us categorize, label, and make sense of the things we see and hear. We sometimes do the same thing as we try to understand people. For example, if we met a Muslim student wearing a burka in one of our classes, we may fill in unknown information, such as the person's value system, beliefs, political views, or whether she is well educated or affluent, to help us understand the person. Unfortunately, what we fill in may be based on biases and ignorance.

When supplying missing information, competent communicators remain aware of what they are doing and remember to distinguish between what they know and what they don't. Otherwise they increase their chances of forming a wrong or inac-

Figure 2.1 Closure: Cow or Incomplete Drawing?

The partial outlines of this shape lead us to fill in the missing lines so that we can make sense of it. This drawing of the visual data allows us to give meaning to the drawing.



you haven't probed enough to really know the person's views, and you may have just lost a possibly rewarding relationship.

Perceptions and their interpretations regarding people and events occur all the time. Differences in how those perceptions are interpreted depend upon the information received, our biases, and experiences. For example, the killing of Michael Brown, an 18-year-old black man who was fatally shot by Darren Wilson, a 28-year-old white Ferguson police officer, in Ferguson, Missouri, has led to both peaceful and violent protests regarding the killing of blacks by white police officers. The circumstances of the shooting and the subsequent decision of the grand jury not to indict Officer Wilson illustrate how perceptions of this tragedy not only influence our communication, but our behaviors as well.

PROXIMITY Proximity is the grouping of two or more stimuli that are close to one another based on the assumption that because objects or people appear together, they are similar. It is not unusual for some of us to think that people whose appearance, nationality, race, and origin are similar and who reside in the same community or belong to the same organization (fraternity, sorority, club, church, etc.) perceive others, events, and activities in the same way. For us to assume that they do would not only be inaccurate, but also wrong. Thus, we must be careful not to categorize or to communicate as if those who appear together think, behave, and believe the same way on every issue or situation. Competent communicators verify and do not categorize individuals based on their proximity to one another.

SIMILARITY Organization based on similarity involves the grouping of stimuli that resemble one another in size, shape, color, or other traits. For example, Shelley, a sophomore who likes to party, might believe that others who enjoy partying resemble her in other ways as well. Thus, if Shelley likes both partying and hiking, she might assume that others who like to party will also like hiking. Of course, this may be wishful thinking on her part; just because two people are similar in one attribute

Proximity

The grouping of two or more stimuli that are close to one another.

Similarity

The grouping of stimuli that resemble one another in size, shape, color, or other traits.

Making Connections for Success

The Web and Perception

Kevin is a senior whose Facebook page is loaded with pictures of him partying and goofing around. He spends hours making sure his page lets others know of the fun he has, whether it be on spring break or just having a good time with friends. Most every picture he posts or is tagged in show him with a beer or some other drink in his hand. His Instagram photos and messages are extensions of his Facebook page, which show him as less than serious about his education.

In his LinkedIn bio, Kevin indicates he has a 4.00 GPA, and that he is president of the Honors Club in Chemistry, which is his major. He also indicates he plans to go to med school after he graduates next month. He comes from a professional family; his mother and father are surgeons at the local hospital. He has been extremely active in a variety

of campus and community organizations and is a member of a debate team.

1. Based only on the description of Kevin in the first paragraph, how would you describe him as a person, a student, or as a colleague if a friend were to show you his Facebook page?
2. You are on LinkedIn and you happen to come upon Kevin's bio. Again, having never met him in person, how would you describe him as a person, as a student, or as a colleague?
3. You meet Kevin at a party and find him to be really quite crazy in terms of his behaviors, but you also have seen his LinkedIn bio. How would you describe him as a person, as a student, or as a colleague?
4. What can we learn about perception and communication from this exercise?

all three of these individuals were black and all three were killed by white police officers who were acquitted of any wrongdoing. Based on this limited information and media coverage, we might group the three killings as the same and not perceive the differences. All three incidents are very different, and yet so much of the communication related to the three killings portrays them as similar. When we perceive people, events, or objects as similar it is difficult to see differences, and thus our communication with others often doesn't distinguish them from one another. This, in turn, makes discussion of differing perceptions of such tragedies difficult, if even possible.

Interpretation

Interpretation of what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell is an integral part of who we are and how our perceptions influence our communication. **Interpretation** is the assigning of meaning to stimuli. We use our experiences, both past and present, as well as the opinions of others to help interpret the meaning of stimuli.

INTERPRETATION BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE Our interpretations of stimuli depend on our past experiences. For example, when you first arrived on campus, you probably either asked for help or consulted a map to locate various buildings and classrooms. With each passing day, however, you found it easier to get around and even discovered shortcuts from one place to another. As we become familiar with our surroundings, we don't have to think about where we are going; we just go. When we give directions to someone on how to get from one place to another on campus, it seems intuitive because we have done it so many times. We falsely assume that the person we are giving directions to will understand exactly what we are telling them. A distinct relationship exists between our perceptions and communication.

INTERPRETATION BASED ON NEW SITUATIONS Although past experiences form a basis or foundation for interpreting our environment, we must be careful not to let them keep us from finding fresh meanings in new situations or events.

interpretation

Assigning of meaning to stimuli.

that interpretation is based on the experiences of the person receiving the information, which means that different people receiving the same information may disagree on what it signifies, what it entails, or what conclusions can be drawn from it. Each of us perceives the world through a personal set of “lenses” or “filters,” or how we view ourselves. Therefore, we can never see a river, tree, mountain, person, or event, or hear and interpret a message, in exactly the same way as others. Because others’ perceptions are different, does that make their interpretation wrong, or just different?

INTERPRETATIONS BASED ON OTHERS’ OPINIONS Our perceptions are often altered or influenced by how and what others communicate to us. Much of what we learn about our world comes from magazines, newspapers, television, social media, and the Internet. Through these media, many perceptions are formed. For example, blogs such as Perez Hilton, Daily KOS, Kmeda, Gizmodo, and AMERICAblog.com influence our perceptions and affect our communication in ways we may not question.

You are required to take a communication course in order to graduate at your university. You look at the website ratemyprofessors.com, where all the professors who teach communication courses are evaluated and rated by students. One student wrote about one of the professors: “He is the nicest, most helpful professor in this department. He is the one professor who actually shows that he cares about you and your future. I learned more from him than any other professor and would take more classes with him if I could.” Another student wrote on the same website: “His exams are impossible, his grading is unfair, he is extremely knowledgeable about the subject but his lectures are boring.” Those are two very different perceptions. Determining which comments are a true reflection of this professor is based on the opinions of the two students’ web postings and how much weight you put on others’ opinions and whose opinions you judge to be accurate. Thus, how you view the different perceptions will determine not only whether you take the course from the professor but also how those perceptions will affect yours, depending on which comments you accept as being accurate. Is he caring and a great teacher, or is he boring and a tough grader? Only your experiences will determine which perception is correct for you. However, you have to enter the course with an open mind to truly determine which perception is more accurate than the other.

INTERPRETATION BASED ON VERBAL COMMUNICATION When we think of perception, most of us associate the term with what we see, but we also form perceptions based on the sound of individuals’ speech patterns, which include voice, grammar, and word choices. Speech patterns create images of age, competency, intelligence, cultural or ethnic background, and gender. For example, a soft-spoken voice might be viewed as timid or lacking in confidence, a loud voice as overbearing or controlling, a squeaky voice as annoying, or a deep voice as masculine. We also form images from the accent, speed, fluency, and quality of people’s voices. It is not unusual for Americans to think “foreigner” automatically when they hear an unfamiliar accent. How people use their voices produces a variety of images, both positive and negative. Think about how a person’s voice or use of language influences your perception of that person’s credibility, competency, intelligence, age, or gender.

A college student says, “OK, I don’t understand what you *was* saying”; a coach being interviewed responds, “We got our butts kicked, like *you know*”; a store owner says, “We don’t *got* any more of these”; or a homeless person says, “Our capitalistic society is the best economic system in the world.” How might these statements affect your perception of those making them? If the college student were dressed in a suit

A radio commercial claims, "People judge us by the words we use." It's true people do judge us by the words we use—or don't use. Our word choices in spoken and written communication can affect how others perceive us. The more sophisticated our vocabulary when we speak or write, the more likely others will regard us as intelligent or highly educated. In addition to the words we choose, our pronunciation, our accent, and our vocal quality all create images that influence how others react to us. The connection between how and what we communicate and others' perceptions of us cannot and should not be ignored.

We are taught to believe that actions speak louder than words. But do they? It depends! The perceptions created by what we see do have a powerful influence. For example, in the opening scenario, the photos of Jill may have cost her the internship. Other factors that influenced the supervisor's decision not to offer the internship may have been at play, however. For instance, Jill's cover letter or résumé may have contained spelling errors or, when she interviewed, she may have used poor grammar.

Someone you respect tells you to avoid a certain course or professor because it is a waste of time and the professor speaks with a terrible foreign accent and is impossible to understand. You may avoid the course and professor on the basis of your friend's experience and your perception of that experience. You might also tell someone else that you had heard from a reliable source about the course and professor. Your image of the course and professor were formed from what you were told and not from what you experienced or saw for yourself. What you heard, however, was enough to create a negative image in your mind, even though you have had no experience with the course or the professor. You decide to avoid the course and professor based on what you heard. A couple of weeks later, you talk to another friend whom you also respect and who had the same professor in another course and absolutely loved it. Now you are thinking you may have missed out on a good course and professor. When we base our perceptions on the perceptions of others, we make a lot of assumptions that they see people, events, and things the way we would see them. This is why we sometimes find our initial perceptions to be inaccurate. Therefore, the connection between our perceptions and how we communicate and behave cannot be ignored. Competent communicators not only verify their perceptions and what they were told before drawing conclusions, but are also willing to alter them should new information suggest they do so. At the end of this chapter, you'll learn some techniques for verifying new information.

Making Connections for Success

What You Say Can Hurt You! It's All about Perception

The following quotation was given in an interview and reported in the *New York Times* when a potential candidate for a U.S. Senate seat was asked why she believed she would make a good senator:

So I think in many ways, you know, we want to have all kinds of different voices, you know, representing us, and

2. In what ways would your initial perceptions of the person change if you learned that in the course of the interview she said "you know" 142 times?
3. How would your perceptions of the person's communication alter if you found out that she had written seven books, including two on the Constitution and two on American politics; that she had graduated from Harvard University and Columbia Law School; and that her family name was ...

Perceptual Differences

2.3 Identify seven reasons why different people may perceive the same situation in different ways.

Our past experiences, our physical makeup, our cultural background, and our current psychological state determine what we perceive; how we interpret, evaluate, and organize our perceptions; and our actions in response to them. The following sections discuss how these factors influence our perceptions.

Perceptual Set and Stereotyping

When we ignore new information and instead rely solely on our past experiences—fixed, previously determined views of events, objects, and people—to interpret information, we are using a perceptual set.³ A perceptual set allows our past experiences to control or focus our perceptions so that we ignore information that is different or has changed about an event, object, or person. It is a form of stereotyping. Stereotyping refers to the categorizing of events, objects, and people without regard to unique individual characteristics and qualities. Stereotyping, for example, exists in nearly every intercultural situation, usually because of people's unfamiliarity with the other culture. Stereotyping is pervasive because of the human psychological need to categorize and classify information. Through stereotyping, we profile people and their behaviors. This tendency may hamper our communication by causing us to overlook individual characteristics and differences.

In addition, stereotypes often oversimplify, generalize, or exaggerate traits or qualities and thus are based on half-truths, distortions, and false premises—hardly fertile ground for successful communication. Finally, stereotypes repeat and reinforce beliefs until they come to be taken as the truth. For example, it is not unusual for some of us to assume that student athletes go to college only because they want to participate in their sport. Stereotypes ultimately perpetuate inaccuracies about people and thus may impede or reinforce our communication about those whom we stereotype. Although many stereotypes are negative, positive stereotypes can be found as well. When we stereotype male students as decisive or female students as sensitive, for instance, we project positive images that should apply equally to both genders.

Perceptual set may prevent us from seeing things that differ from what we expect to see and hear or from noticing changes in people and things. Massimo Piattelli-

perceptual set

A fixed, previously determined view of events, objects, or people.

Stereotyping

The categorizing of events, objects, and people without regard to unique individual characteristics and qualities.

a student from China comes to the United States to attend college, many of us would expect the student to lack fluency in English. However, after talking with the student for just a few minutes, you find that not only is she fluent in English, but she also sounds more American than many of us who were born in the United States. You ask her where she learned to speak English so well, and she tells you that she has studied English most of her life, that she studied in England for five years while growing up, and that she is a translator of Chinese to English for government officials in China. A competent communicator avoids the assumption that perceptual sets or stereotypes will always be complete or accurate. Many communication scholars believe that *the greatest single problem with human communication is the assumption that our perceptions are always correct.*⁷

Attribution Error

Attribution

The complex process through which we attempt to understand the reasons behind others' behaviors.

It is human nature to attribute, or assign, causes to people's behavior. **Attribution** is the complex process through which we attempt to understand the reasons behind others' behaviors. Two factors influence our assumptions about our own and others' behavior: the *situation* (environment) and the *disposition* (traits of the person). We are always trying to explain why people behave the way they do; to seek an explanation, we must make assumptions. For example, imagine that you witness the following scene. A classmate arrives over an hour late for a study session. He walks in and drops his iPad on the floor. While trying to pick it up, his glasses fall out of his coat pocket and break. Reaching for his glasses he spills his Coke all over the floor. How would you explain these events? The chances are good that you would reach conclusions such as, "He is disorganized and clumsy." Are your attributions accurate? Perhaps. But it is also possible that he was late because his car would not start, dropped his iPad because it had a slick cover, and spilled his Coke because he was picking up his glasses. Research shows that we are more likely to overestimate dispositional causes and underestimate situational causes of others' actions. This bias is referred to as the **fundamental attribution error**.⁸ Fundamental attribution error occurs when we perceive others acting as they do because they are "that kind of person" rather than because of any external factors that may have influenced their behavior.

Fundamental attribution error

Perceiving others as acting as they do because they are "that kind of person" rather than because of any external factors that may have influenced their behavior.

Suppose you come across a fellow student who is having trouble starting her car. You decide to help by giving her some suggestions on how to start it. She looks at you as though you were an idiot, snaps at you, and ignores you. You get a bit angry and think to yourself, "she's the idiot"; she is rude, insensitive, and self-centered, and doesn't value the help you were offering. Is it possible that several others had already offered the same advice and it failed? Or that she has had an extremely rough day, having failed an exam and broke up with her boyfriend, and the car problem was the icing on the cake? This is another example of a fundamental attribution error. The error is often made because we have no other reference point except the observable behavior of the person in question; thus, we are likely to make a judgment about the person to appease ourselves. It also can lead to faulty and inaccurate communication, especially if we communicate without verification of the facts or situation.

In our own case, we know the situation, so we know what accounts for our behavior. It is often easier to "assume" rather than determine what actually causes someone to behave the way he or she does. For example, a student who speaks with an accent and has trouble expressing himself in class might be perceived as not very intelligent. However, after the first exam you learn that the same student scored the

themselves. This is a fundamental attribution error based on the assumption that, because the student does not speak fluently, he lacks intelligence.

Think about the times when a person has communicated something about us without knowing what we have been going through; it probably angered us to some extent. As competent communicators, we need to learn how to avoid making fundamental attribution errors and taking too narrow a perspective. We should stop and think before making judgments about other people's behavior and at least ask ourselves if we are possibly overreacting or misjudging the situation. Through such questioning, we will improve our ability to form accurate perceptions, as well as our communication.

Physical Characteristics

Our weight, height, body shape, health, strength, and ability to use our five senses can account for differences in what we perceive. For example, if you are visually impaired, you likely experience the world in ways that a sighted person may find difficult to comprehend or even imagine. Sighted people might not automatically take such differences into account, thus making communication a bit awkward.

It is not unusual that when we meet someone for the first time, we react to a variety of factors, no matter how superficial, resulting in emotional reactions that lead to a positive or negative image of that person. One such factor is the clothing the person is wearing. Beyond such factors as neatness or perceived cost, clothing color and style appear to have an effect on our perception. It seems that we make an automatic association between brightness and affect; specifically, bright is good, and dark equals bad.⁹ Perceptions are also influenced by observable disabilities, the presence of eyeglasses, a person's height and physique, and facial hair on men.¹⁰ Once again, perceptions can lead to assumptions, and those assumptions can influence how and what we communicate with others.

Psychological State

Another factor that influences or alters our perceptions of people, events, and things is our state of mind. All information coming to us passes through various filters and screens that sort and color what we receive and how we perceive it. Obviously, when everything is going well and we are in a positive frame of mind, we view things, events, and people much more positively than when our mind-set is negative. When we are under a great deal of stress or if we have a poor self-image, these conditions will influence how we perceive the world around us. Sometimes this distortion is small and temporary and has no appreciable effect on communication. At other times, our state of mind can actually reverse meaning or alter a message, changing how we select, organize, and interpret it. It is undeniable that psychological disposition can color or alter perceptions and, ultimately, communication. Think about how you feel when you are upset, angry, or frustrated with someone or something and when you are not. How does your disposition affect your communication with others? In the next chapter, the connections between self-concept and perception are discussed in more detail.

Cultural Background

Cultural background can also affect the perception of other people, events, and things. Culture has well over a hundred different definitions, each taking a different

communicative style, and attitudes, all of which contribute to a group's identity distinct from that of other cultural groups.

Take a moment and reflect on the cultural beliefs you hold that influence you perceive the world and interact in it. Your views on work, education, free age, competitiveness, personal space, cleanliness and hygiene, gender, loyalty, and mourning, etiquette, health, status differentiation, bodily adornment, court family, art, music, technology, and the like all play a role in your cultural identity. Your views also affect how you communicate and interact with others.

Cultural identity has little or nothing to do with physical features, such as color, shape of eyes, or sex, because these characteristics are passed on genetically and not by communication. Because people of a particular race or country are often taught similar beliefs, values, and attitudes, those similarities have created such labels as "African American," "Hispanic," "Native American," or "European American." Each of these labels, by definition, suggests that cultural differences exist among these groups, but the labels do not suggest that differences may also be found within the groups. Most of us have been conditioned to believe that people who are similar in race or nationality think and behave in the same way. This way of thinking, however, is likely to lead to misunderstandings and perceptual errors. For example, two Hispanic business owners, one in New York City and the other in rural Nebraska while labeled "Hispanics," could have different values, beliefs, and lifestyles because of where they live. Yet both are labeled Hispanic. Therefore, to assume that they think and act similarly because they both are Hispanic or because of their physical features is an assumption that could prove wrong. The competent communicator does not rely on labels or physical characteristics to make assumptions about people's values, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors. The competent communicator does, however, learn about others through communication and observations of their behaviors. The competent communicator seeks information and asks questions to ensure the accuracy of what is being perceived and communicated.

Culture is an integral part of each of us and determines many of our individual characteristics. Culture identifies us as members of a particular group and shapes our values and biases. Much cultural influence occurs without our realizing it: Typically, we are not conscious of how much of our behavior is conditioned by culture. The way we greet others, the way we use language, our opinions about what and when to eat, and many of our personal preferences are all culturally conditioned.¹²

The connection between culture and communication is extremely complex. In fact, because of culture we learn to communicate, according to McDaniel, Samovar, and Porter. For example, a Korean, an Egyptian, or an American learns to communicate like other Koreans, Egyptians, or Americans, respectively. Each knows that certain behaviors convey certain meanings because they are learned and shared in their respective cultures.¹³ Just as they behave in a certain way, people also perceive and organize their thoughts, observations, and values according to the dictates of their culture. For example, in a purely scientific sense, the moon

Culture evolves through communication, beliefs, artifacts, and a style of living shared by others. Traditions and customs also play a role in shaping a culture and communicating it to future generations, such as this Indian celebration with special food, dress, and rituals.



Making Connections for Success

Perceptual Differences

Create a list of groups, such as Korean Americans, Midwesterners, Catholics, homosexuals, Muslims, ranchers, Protestants, and so on. You can use these groups if you wish, but you could also create your own list of three to five groups. Now select two groups and list traits that describe each. For example, for athletes, you might list

such traits as competitive, aggressive, dedicated, skilled, and so on.

1. What role does perception have, if any, in creating your list of traits?
2. In what ways would the list of traits and characteristics influence how you communicate about or with individuals in these groups?

a lady fleeing her husband; and Samoans see in it the shape of a woman weaving.¹⁴ These particular differences might not seem significant, but they point to the way that people from different cultures can view the same phenomenon quite differently. When cultural differences are apparent, sensitivity, patience, and tolerance are required to avoid or reduce misunderstandings that can create barriers to effective communication and to relationship development.

Being unable to appreciate ideas, customs, or beliefs that differ from those of one's own cultural background and automatically assuming that one's own view is superior to that of any other culture is referred to as **ethnocentrism**. **Ethnocentrism** is a learned belief that our own culture is superior to all others.¹⁵ Those who lack interaction or contact with other cultures may find it difficult to understand that other cultures and their practices may be as acceptable as our own. Even if we know of weaknesses in our own culture (too competitive, too materialistic, too informal, and so on), we are unlikely to criticize our own culture when comparing it to others.

Ethnocentrism is not necessarily a bad thing, but it does alter our perceptions and often colors how we regard others who are different from us. We learn to behave through culture, and the way we behave, most of us believe, is the way everyone else should behave. We use our culture and our cultural behaviors as a yardstick by which to judge all other cultures and people. The difference between a person's own culture and other cultures is often judged on a superiority-inferiority scale. People often view cultures different from their own as inferior. The greater the differences seen between cultures, the greater the degree of perceived inferiority.

Ethnocentrism

A learned belief that our own culture is superior to all others.

Gender

Another factor that affects the way we perceive our world is gender. Unlike biological sex, **gender** is socially constructed and involves learned behaviors related to masculinity, **androgyny**, and femininity. Some theorists believe that where we fall on the masculine-and-feminine scale determines how we learn to understand the world around us, resulting in the way we perceive and communicate.

It has been shown, in groups containing both females and males, that males in general tend to talk for longer periods of time, take more turns at speaking, exert more control over the topic of conversation, and interrupt females more frequently than females interrupt males. In addition, what males say appears to be taken more seriously than what females say.¹⁶ These communication differences may occur because of how females and males understand their roles and how those roles are defined by culture.

Gender

A socially constructed concept related to masculine and feminine behaviors that are learned.

Androgyny

A socially constructed concept related to having both masculine and feminine traits.

aggressive; be sexual; and be self-reliant.¹⁷ Our understanding of masculinity and femininity changes continually.

An interesting study on voice pitch and perceived affection in initial interaction by Kory Floyd and George B. Bay, two communication scholars, found that men whose voices were higher pitched were seen as weak or effeminate and would therefore not be regarded by women as a good relational fit.¹⁸ However, with women, the opposite was found to be true. Women with higher-pitched voices were perceived to be more affectionate than women with lower-pitched voices. The researchers' conclusion is that men's voices are perceived to be friendlier and less dominant or aggressive when they are lower in pitch, whereas women's voices are perceived to be friendlier and less dominant when they are higher in pitch.¹⁹

A great deal of uncertainty remains about what causes the differences in the roles of men and women in our society. We are told about "the gender gap" and about how men and women don't understand each other or speak the same language. Some social scientists believe that when men and women communicate they are using a form of cross-cultural communication in which the sexes are not speaking from different cultures or dialects, but rather "genderlects."²⁰ The argument that is used is that women and men interact in ways that are powerful but often not perceived. Men are often confused when women want to continue talking about something they think has been settled; women often find themselves frustrated when men don't seem to listen or respond to what they say. The perceptions that men and women have of each other and of themselves are not always clear, especially in this time of transition, in which the roles of men and women are constantly changing. Most of us today believe that both men and women can pursue careers or can be involved in homemaking and child care. Americans, as a group, have to some extent enlarged their perspectives on the roles and abilities of both men and women.

Media

Sometimes other people influence our perceptions deliberately. Advertisers, government leaders, political advocates, and many others attempt to shape our views. Advertisers have mastered techniques to encourage us to think and behave in ways that will benefit their clients.

Have you ever wondered how much the media influences our perceptions? In recent elections, candidates have hired people often referred to as "handlers" or "spin doctors." Their job is to create a positive image of their candidates and to protect them from any exposure that might create a negative image. Besides trying to create favorable impressions by using positive messages related to their candidates, they also try to create negative messages and images of their candidates' opponents. It is often said that while negative ads are seen as unfavorable by most, they do have more of a persuasive effect than positive ads.

What about the shows we watch on television? Do they create or alter our perceptions? Although family sitcoms, for example, present families who are generally atypical, regardless of race or ethnic background, they still influence our image of families. Network news shows select events from all the reports they receive and present them to us in a half-hour broadcast which, when the commercials are removed, amounts to approximately 24 minutes of actual news. The information we see is not only limited but also selected and edited for our consumption, affecting our perceptions of the world.

The influence of the media on our perceptions was no more evident than in the

the protests on the media and the various people who spoke about this tragedy in the media in support of the Brown family.

According to reports by the *New York Times*, the events that led to Brown's tragic death were as follows: At 11:54 a.m., Michael Brown and a friend left a convenience store, where a surveillance video shows Brown stealing cigarillos and shoving the store owner to get out the door. At 12:01 p.m., Officer Wilson, by himself, told two men to get off the street and onto the sidewalk. He noticed that one of the men appeared to fit the description of one of the suspects in the convenience-store theft. At 12:02 p.m., Officer Wilson called the dispatcher about the two men. He then moved his patrol car to block them from going further. The events that followed led to significant speculation as to what really took place. Many media outlets reported the following:

On the afternoon of Aug. 9, a police officer fatally shot an unarmed, black teenager, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri. Details remain in dispute. Eyewitnesses have said that Brown was compliant with police and was shot while he had his hands up. Police maintain that the 18-year-old had assaulted an officer and was reaching for the officer's gun. One thing is clear, however, is that Brown's death follows a disturbingly common trend of black men being killed, often while unarmed and at the hands of police officers, security guards and vigilantes. (*The Huffington Post*, by Nick Wing, posted August 14, 2014.)

It is important to recognize that our selection of Internet sites may be based on our biases and our desire to reinforce our own beliefs and convictions. Competent communicators always attempt to evaluate the information they are receiving, even if it does not reinforce their views. They might look at the reviews of others who have gotten information from the site, or they themselves may research other sites to determine the accuracy of information they are seeing.

Many of us who use social media believe that our messages do not create perceptions or that, if they do, the perceptions cannot be interpreted. However, as with anything we communicate, our use of emails, Facebook posts, or tweets does create perceptions and can be interpreted in ways we might not intend. As senders of emails or users of Facebook, for example, we should always be aware that the messages we send or post are open to inferences and interpretations by those who receive them. Therefore, we need to be careful in what and how we write and what we show or don't show. Those who receive our emails or view our Facebook page form impressions and make inferences based on the language we use, spelling accuracy, the tone in which we write our messages, or the photos we post.



Making Connections for Success

Perceptions and Ethics

Bob, a photographer, is hired by your college to take pictures to make the college appear as attractive as possible for its Internet web page. When he gets to campus, Bob notices right away that it is located in an undesirable part of the city, parking is difficult, and the campus is in need of lots of maintenance. Therefore, he does not take any photos that show the surroundings. He does, however, photograph a student dressed to look like a successful businessperson approaching the newly remodeled entrance of the administration building. He takes close-up photos of a diverse group of students to show the diversity on campus. He takes a shot of a small pond in front of one of the campus

buildings, using a wide-angle lens to give the illusion of a lake. Bob has created the impression on the Internet that the college attracts a variety of students, has a modern campus, and has a lake.

1. What do you think of what Bob has done regarding the perceptions he has created through the photos he took?
2. Because the area around the campus is blighted and a poor neighborhood, Bob decides to take photos of attractions and homes in another part of the city and use them, giving the impression that they are close to the campus. Is this ethical? Why or why not?
3. How can you be sure that the Internet sites you view are presenting images and messages in a truthful way?

We must also keep in mind that the information we receive via the Internet and social media is only as good or reliable as the sources. What we see, hear, or read on the Internet, in emails, on Facebook pages, or in tweets does affect our perceptions and ultimately our view of the world. The Internet and social media are powerful tools and, as with other media, cannot be assumed to always contain reliable information.

The example of the media's influence on the public perception of the killing of blacks by white police officers shows how the media can mold and reinforce perceptions in powerful ways. You might believe there is nothing wrong with this, but think about how we depend on the media for information and how people often accept what is presented to them by the media without question. The gap between reality and what is presented to us can be huge. Competent communicators check the information they receive—especially when the source is unknown to them—to determine its truthfulness and accuracy.

Improving Perception Competencies and Perception Checking

2.4 Accurately interpret and check your perceptions to improve your communication competence.

To be competent communicators, we must understand the impact that perceptions have on us, how we communicate with others, and what we accept as reality through the communication we receive. We tend to take the validity of our perceptions for granted and fail to look beneath the surface. For example, you and Stephanie are taking the same biology class. You have heard from another student that Stephanie goes out a lot and really likes to party. Her Facebook page is loaded with sexy photos, and she is holding a beer in many of them. You see her as a party girl and assume her only motivation to be in college is to have a good time. She seldom is on time for class, misses class more than most, and doesn't say much in class unless she is

find that Stephanie received the second-highest grade in the class. You could infer that Stephanie cheated, because there is no way, from what you know, that she could have done that well on the exam. No matter what reason you choose, you are making an inference, and if you communicate that inference without labeling it as such, you may be communicating false—or at the very least misleading—information about Stephanie to others. To become a more competent communicator, you must realize that your perceptions are partial and subjective and could be wrong.²¹ To avoid misperceptions, you must be an active perceiver, recognize that you may not perceive the same as others, be aware that fact differs from inference, learn about the role of perception in communication, keep an open mind, and, when possible, always perception check.

Become an Active Perceiver

First, we must be active as perceivers. We must be willing to seek out as much information as possible about a given person, subject, event, or situation. The more information we obtain, the deeper our understanding, and the more accurate our perceptions will be. We must question our perceptions to determine how accurate they are. By acknowledging that we may misinterpret information, we prompt ourselves to confirm facts and impressions before we draw conclusions. Taking time to gather more information and recheck the accuracy of our perceptions is well worth the effort. For example, is Stephanie late for class because she is lazy or because she has another class across campus right before biology? Does she miss class because she is not interested or because the bus sometimes doesn't run? An active perceiver will ask Stephanie why she is often late or misses class and will not make attribution errors.

Recognize That Each Person's Frame of Reference Is Unique

Second, we must recognize the uniqueness of our own frame of reference. We must remember that our view of things may be only one of many views. Each of us has a unique window to the world, as well as a unique system of understanding and storing data. Some of us make judgments about people based on appearance, whereas others base their judgments on ability, income, education, gender, ethnicity, or other factors. This variety of approaches shows that all of us operate according to different perceptual systems, and it is wrong to assume that one system is better than another.

Distinguish Facts from Inferences

A third way to improve our perceptions and interpretations is to distinguish facts from inferences or assumptions. A fact is a statement put forth as objectively real that can be verified. For example, it is a known fact which science building on campus is the tallest, that Gina has been late to class five times this semester, and that the volleyball team has won its last six games. An inference is an interpretation that goes beyond what we know to be factual. For example, Stephanie is almost always late to class, received a 96 on the mid-term exam, and generally does not say much while in class. These events or behaviors are what you have observed and are verifiable and therefore are facts. However, when you say Stephanie is lazy, unprepared, disorganized, and unmotivated to learn, you are making inferences that may or may not be accurate.

Making Connections for Success

Just the Facts and Nothing but the Facts

Competent communicators can distinguish facts from inferences—can you?

1. College students who party are less likely to do well on exams—fact or inference?
2. There are more women than men going to college today—fact or inference?
3. Chapter 2 discusses perception and communication—fact or inference?

4. College graduates, on average, make more money than non-college graduates—fact or inference?
5. Students who use social media during their classes have low motivation to learn—fact or inference?
6. Athletes who use special equipment to enhance their performance are unethical—fact or inference?

For answers see page 51.

Competent communicators qualify inferences by labeling them as such. How would you qualify the above statements that are not factual?

them. For example, saying “Stephanie seems to be lazy” is much more tentative and is not stated as a fact or with certainty. A next step might be to learn more about Stephanie; try to draw her out, and find out if anything is affecting her life or discover more about her background before making a judgment about her.

Become Aware of the Role of Perceptions in Communication

A fourth way to improve our perceptions and interpretations is to be aware of the role of perceptions in communication, to take others' perceptions into account, and to avoid the tendency to assume too much about what we perceive. To make the most of the information we receive, we must first evaluate it. We should check the source of the information and the context in which it was acquired. We should make sure we are not reading too much into the information. To help ensure the accuracy of our perceptions, we should ask questions and obtain feedback whenever possible. We cannot determine whether our perceptions are accurate without testing them.

Keep an Open Mind

A fifth way to improve our perceptions and interpretations is to keep an open mind and remind ourselves that our perceptions may not be complete or accurate. Thus, we must continue to make observations, seek out additional information, be willing to describe what we observe both mentally and out loud, state what a given observation means to us, and put our perceptions into words to test their logic and soundness. For example, is it possible that Stephanie doesn't communicate much in class because she is shy, or is it because she hasn't come prepared, or is some other reason at work? If she didn't cheat, then either she is very smart or she studies a lot. We need to perception check to ensure the accuracy of what we are thinking and communicating.

Perception Checking: Being a Competent Communicator

Making Connections for Success

Competent Communicators Check Their Perceptions for Accuracy

In this chapter, we have discussed perception, its relationship to communication, and our competence as communicators. To check our perceptions, we should (1) try to state what we observed as best we can, (2) recognize that what we observe is a possible explanation, (3) consider other possible explanations, and (4) ask or check on the accuracy of the possible explanation(s).

Example: You saw Jason, an athlete friend, walking out of a clinic known for its distribution of steroids; Jason has shown a significant improvement in his athleticism over the past several months.

Perception-checking steps: I saw Jason, a good friend and athlete, coming out of a clinic that has been rumored to sell steroids. [(1) This is what was observed—describe,

don't infer.] Jason was there to buy steroids. [(2) This is one possible explanation.] Jason was at the clinic to get his sprained ankle checked out, to check on a friend who was hurt, or to get painkillers for his ankle sprain. [(3) These are other possible explanations.] Which explanation is the correct one, if any? [(4) Check on the accuracy or qualify the observation by stating that you don't know the reason Jason was coming out of the clinic.]

Example for you to create your own perception-checking statements: Debra, a friend of yours who has been struggling in her speech class with Cs on her speeches, borrows an outline of a speech for which you received an A grade last semester. You overhear her bragging to another friend that she received an A on her last speech.

1. How would you use perception-checking steps in the above example?
2. What did you learn from the use of perception-checking steps?

a friend of mine and I exchange emails periodically, but if I don't respond within a day or so of receiving his email, he assumes that I am upset with him. Of course, I am not upset with him, but that is what he perceives when he does not receive an instant response from me. Think about this example and of how many times others have jumped to inaccurate conclusions about your thoughts, feelings, or motives.

Developing the skill of perception checking should help prevent jumping to the wrong conclusions about others' thoughts, feelings, or motives. For example, when a favorite teacher walks by, you say "Hi" and smile, but the teacher does not even acknowledge your presence although you believe she looked directly

Guidelines

Check Your Perceptions: Competent Communicators Do!

1. **Separate fact from assumptions.** It is easy to accept assumptions, but we must realize that assumptions are not facts, nor are they always accurate. When we make assumptions we are drawing conclusions with little or no basis of fact. Thus, we should label assumptions so that when we communicate them, they are differentiated from facts.
2. **Recognize your personal biases.** We all have biases that can influence our perceptions, and we must be careful that those biases don't inaccurately slant our perceptions. We should always qualify, when recognized, that our biases may have influenced our communication about events, objects, and people.
3. **Remember that perceptions, especially first impressions, are not always accurate.** This is important because when we make judgments based on limited information or our first impression, we may cling to that impression or perception as if that is all there is to know.
4. **Recognize that people from different cultural backgrounds do not always attach the same meanings to events, objects, and people.** It is important to recognize that not everyone sees the world as you do, and this is especially true of people who come from different cultural backgrounds. For example, it is not unusual for someone who lives in Europe or the Middle East to walk with someone of the same sex holding hands or kissing them on the cheek. How this might be perceived depends on differences in cultural norms or background.
5. **Remember that perceptions are a function of the perceiver, the perceived, and the situation in which the perception occurs.** To ensure accuracy it is important to understand that perception is in the eye of the beholder, to understand what is perceived and why, and to take into account the situation or context of the perception.
6. **Don't be afraid to communicate to verify your perceptions.** It is important that you ask questions and seek additional information to ensure the accuracy of your perceptions. You do not want to leave yourself open to interpretations or misunderstandings that could be avoided.
7. **Be willing to admit misperceptions and to change them when necessary.** It is important to correct misperceptions and admit when perceptions are not accurate. It is also the responsibility of the perceiver to make changes when errors or misunderstanding occur.

Summary

Perception and Communication

Objective 2.1 Make the connection between perception and your communication competence.

Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information to give it personal meaning. It lies at the heart of the communication process and is a part of everything we do.

The Perception Process

Objective 2.2 Understand the stages of perception and how they affect your communication.

Perception involves selecting, organizing, and interpreting.

- Selection is the process of mentally sorting one thing from another.
- Organization is the categorizing of stimuli so that we can make sense of them.

Because everyone is different, their perceptions of an identical situation may vary.

- The perceptual set—a fixed, previously determined view of people, things, or events—can distort our perception of reality. Stereotyping, a form of perceptual set, can also lead to inaccuracies in our perception and, ultimately, our communication.
- Attribution error can occur when people perceive others as they do because of the kind of people they are rather than through external factors that may have influenced their behavior.
- Physical characteristics can account for differences in perception.
- Psychological state or our state of mind can alter our perceptions of people, events, and things.
- Cultural backgrounds can affect the way people perceive others, as well as events and things.

Improving Perception Competencies and Perception Checking

Objective 2.4 Accurately interpret and check your perceptions to improve your communication competence. To be competent communicators, we must recognize the effect of differences in perception.

- An active perceiver seeks out information.
- Perceptions are not always the same for everyone.
- Facts are objective; inferences are subjective.
- Perception plays a role in communication.
- It is possible that another perception may be valid.
- It is always wise to check your perceptions.

Discussion Starters

1. Why does perception play such a huge role in our communication with others?
2. Explain the connection between perception and communication competence.
3. Given what you have read, what is the influence of social networking sites on perception? What advice would you give regarding communication on these sites?
4. Describe a personal experience that illustrates attribution error. How did the error affect communication?
5. How has technology affected our perceptions and how we communicate with others?
6. Explain the role of Hollywood media in shaping our perceptions and, ultimately, how we perceive the world around us.

Answers

Making Connections for Success: Just the Facts and Nothing but the Facts (p. 48)
Numbers 2, 3, and 4 are facts; and 1, 5, and 6 are inferences.